

Grace M. Moore. Improving Teen Library Program Attendance: Young Adult Librarians' Perspectives. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2012. 50 pages.
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This study aims to determine the best practices in planning and promoting young adult public library programs that successfully bring in teenage attendees. Data was gathered from in-person interviews with six young adult librarians in public libraries in North Carolina and Florida. The researcher also collected any available attendance data from the past year for the selected libraries. Interviewees expressed having mixed results with social media and email promotion, but consistently emphasized the value of personal relationships with teen patrons and word-of-mouth promotion. Attendance data revealed that programs at these libraries with guest presenters or creative performances by teens were the most highly-attended. This research was completed to offer guidance to the many young adult librarians who struggle to raise their program attendance.

Headings:

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IMPROVING TEEN LIBRARY PROGRAM ATTENDANCE:
YOUNG ADULT LIBRARIANS' PERSPECTIVES

by
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Library programming has tremendous potential benefits for the young people involved. Librarians who successfully bring teens in to programs in their library have the power to enrich the lives of their teens and support their developmental needs through education and entertainment. As an employee and patron at several public libraries, though, I've seen a number of young adult librarians struggle to raise teen programming attendance. The volume of articles in library science publications with advice about how to bring teens into library programs also speaks to the greatness of the challenge.

Many authors write about their own experience with one program in particular. In my study, I pull together data from six different libraries, and from multiple programs held at each, to compare how different methods of promoting and planning affect success in terms of attendance. This study compares public librarians' practices and attendance data, reflecting both successes and failures, to find the most effective ways to draw teens into library programming according to their experiences.

Based on informal observations I have made as a public library employee and patron, and in the literature I review below, I anticipate that my study will show that teen attendance at public library programs will be greater for those that are promoted in a variety of media, and are created with direct teen input and regard for the developmental traits unique to young adults.

Literature Review

Value of Programming

The “40 Developmental Assets” for teens, as described by the Search Institute, an organization dedicated to research and education in adolescent and child development, reveal the great potential that outside forces have on helping teens grow and develop. These assets, which “help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible,” include several areas relevant to the public library, such as “creative activities,” “youth programs,” and “youth as resources” (meaning “young people are given useful roles in the community,” something that frequently takes place on library teen boards and at other volunteer opportunities in library programming). These are all external assets that the community can offer for the teen. Internal assets, though, may also be cultivated in library programs, some of which include “commitment to learning” and “social competencies” (2006). Library programs for young adults offer entertainment and opportunities to cultivate these attitudes and skills for young people.

It’s important to remember, too, that these opportunities are not necessarily available elsewhere. As Hartman points out, “While anecdotally we often think that kids are overscheduled, research in the field has corroborated that youth who are overscheduled tend to be the exception rather than the rule. [...] it’s a safe bet that there are more youth in your community who lack opportunities during afterschool hours than you know.” She goes on to observe that there is an “important role informal programs have in academic achievement during the school day. Research has shown that one factor in the achievement gap disparity is the difference in how youth spend their [out-of-school time]--the difference between engagement in an afterschool program (whatever the focus)

and sitting at home watching TV” (2011, p. 11). Clearly, libraries have a huge opportunity to provide this support, if they can bring teens in to take advantage of their programming.

Furthermore, strong teen library programming will support the mission of most public libraries. As Donna P. Miller states, in *Crash Course in Teen Library Services*, “If...you believe that part of the public library’s mission is to provide quality information, recreation, entertainment, and educational opportunities to folks in your community and to create a ‘sense of place’ for all citizens, then library programming is a powerful tool for accomplishing that mission...Basically, if the public library is to effectively serve the common good, then part of the library’s mission should address the provision of quality programs to all of your library’s customers” (2008, p. 74). Melanie Huggins defines the goals of youth services in different terms that still align well with the potential of teen programs to change young people’s lives for the better: “Libraries and their programs for teens serve a much broader purpose,” she says. “We want teens to feel a part of a community, to obtain leadership skills, to be culturally aware, and to be advocates of the library” (qtd. in Ishizuka, 2003, p. 47). Indeed, these are goals common to most public libraries, and ones that can clearly be supported by a combination of well-executed educational and entertaining teen programming.

Planning/Teen Input

Numerous authors recommend seeking teen input in program planning decisions. Morrison (2010) and Shay (2011) explain that high attendance is attainable through actively planning programs based on teen input. Miller (2008) also recommends seeking teen input, explaining, “An excellent way to start the process of planning programs for

teens is, you guessed it, ask them what they want and need. Although some of their ideas may be a bit lofty, with some guidance and clear parameters from which to proceed, teens will generate program ideas that are both doable and fun for them” (p. 74).

Ishizuka (2003) emphasizes the importance of empowering teens, quoting Melanie Huggins, who oversaw thriving teen library programs at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg library: “We’ve changed our attitudes about serving teens, not assuming we know what they need -- asking them what they need -- and developing ways to work with them to develop services” (qtd. in Ishizuka, 2003, p. 47). Her library has found a great deal of success in empowering teens to define their own needs.

Based on teens’ comments about library programming, Agosto (2007) recommends organizing clubs based around teen interests, having a teen advisory board, and soliciting teens’ suggestions for programming ideas. Her conclusions demonstrate the value of teen opinions in developing services, and that teens will readily share opinions when asked. Her conclusions regarding library programming support my hypothesis regarding teen-directed program planning.

Promotion

Regarding marketing more specifically, Goodstein (2007) observes that teens highly value each other’s opinions, and that word-of-mouth is an effective way to reach teens. Yutzey (2001) takes this idea one step further by literally using teen library patrons in her promotional materials. For her “Teen Read Week” posters, she solicited book reviews from students at her high school that were then entered in a contest. The winning reviewers were featured, each on their own poster, holding their favorite books. Ishizuka (2003) includes several examples of thriving teen programs led by librarians who take an

interest in teens' interests and in their lives on a personal level. Shell, a Brooklyn librarian, explains, "When a kid enters the library, the first thing I do is ask, 'How was your day? What's going on?'" (qtd. p. 48). This sort of individual interest has been an integral part of the programming that has flourished in his library.

In regard to promotion other than word-of-mouth and the traditional use of fliers and newsletters, Sellers quotes Vice President of Trade Publicity at Scholastic Tracy van Straaten regarding online promotion: "Part of the trick to marketing books to teens online is that the most effective results seem to come from the coverage that appears most organic, viral, and uncommercial in nature" (2007, p. 27). This statement is encouraging for libraries, which should naturally appear non-commercial and organic. It also demonstrates that in addition to word-of-mouth, online marketing is effective, too, especially when taking a non-commercial stance. Shay (2011) also emphasizes that one should promote widely and consistently. These sources show the potential power of varied promotional techniques and direct teen input to increase teens' interest in attending library events.

Program Content

So how do librarians bring young adults into libraries to reap the benefits? Some librarians believe the way to bring teens in is through greater inclusion of technology in the programs themselves (Hill, 2010) or through activities and contests that engage young people creatively, like photography or writing contests (Benway, 2010).

In "Why Do Teens Use Libraries: Results of a Public Library Use Survey," Denise Agosto goes straight to teens for answers. She learns that teens that do use the library do so for a variety of reasons, including personal and academic information needs,

as a physical refuge, and for organized and informal entertainment. She also suggests that librarians create programs with entertainment in mind, and not strictly education (Agosto 2007).

Melanie Huggins, quoted in Ishizuka (2003, p. 47), says that “anything job related [attracts] tons of teens” and has responded by creating a Library Initiative for Youth in Business program that offers job training, job-referral services, and workshops on personal finance and other life skills. She observed, on the other hand, that the traditional library book club did not appeal to teens. While these examples of successful and unsuccessful individual programs are valuable glimpses into the authors’ experiences, each article has a relatively narrow perspective that is limited to each author’s own experiences.

Methodology and Analytical Techniques

A description of the best practices for teen library programming will be of help to teen librarians who want to bring more people in to their programs. My project aims to identify the most effective means of program planning and promotion based on a number of programs from several different libraries. In terms of planning, I looked specifically at the benefits and/or drawbacks of seeking direct teen input for program planning, but during my interviews I also asked where librarians found ideas other than from teens for their programs with the highest attendance. Their answers will ideally serve as guideposts for other teen librarians who are looking for places to find good ideas for teen programs.

I did the same when looking for the most successful means of promotion. I hoped to defend the statement that direct teen input and a variety of promotional techniques increase program attendance, but ultimately the information that resulted from the

analysis of the interview responses and attendance data gave other insights into what techniques worked the best to bring teens into public library programs. This knowledge, put in to practice, will in turn help teens who stand to benefit greatly from attending well-planned programs offered at their library.

Librarians were asked by phone to participate. I sought six librarians to participate in the study, and selection of participants was based on their having a professional librarian position that included regularly planning and implementing teen programs, and my ability to travel to their libraries to meet them in person. In order to add some geographical diversity to the responses, I interviewed librarians in North Carolina and Florida.

I worked with them over the phone to plan a time for an interview. At that time, I also asked that they be prepared to provide any available attendance data for their teen programs in the past year when we met in person. During the interview, which took place at each participant's library, I asked about their professional practices regarding teen program planning and promotion (See Appendix for interview questions).

I defined promotion as any means used to make teens aware of programming and encourage their participation in library programs, including digital promotion (via email, library website, or social networking tools), print promotion (including handing out fliers, bookmarks, and newsletters), in-person verbal promotion, other media promotion (including television or radio), and posted signage within and outside of the library. Promotion was measured in terms of variety; quality of the promotional materials was not within the scope of this project.

In the context of this study, “teen” is defined as an individual between the ages of 11 and 19. This age range starts younger than the typical definition of teen because many libraries draw the line between middle and elementary school for the shift from the children’s section to the “young adult” section. A teen program is defined as an event organized by a public librarian with the intention of having teens in attendance as participants, with attendance being number of teens that are present at any point during a program, in the space where the program occurs. Teen-directed programming is programming for teens that is designed based on input directly from teens, in the form of a teen board or another medium for teen suggestions, such as a comment box.

I asked before the interview for the librarians to bring their attendance data for two reasons: first, because I was to use it for quantitative analysis in my research and second, because it could help jog their memory when I asked them questions about the year’s programs. I also asked questions about both opinion and behavior regarding planning and promotion methods and the resulting attendance. I anticipated that their opinions about good practices might not mirror the statistics, and might provide insight that I would miss otherwise if just dealing with the attendance data.

Behavioral questions, though, should directly detect what is actually taking place in the library. This opportunity for an in-depth, qualitative discussion in addition to the attendance numbers is one of the benefits of meeting participants in person. I also asked about both their successes and failures, with the hope of seeing how the two extremes differed in my areas of interest. Fewer articles are written about programming failures than successes, so this offers a valuable glimpse into practices teen librarians should perhaps avoid.

The attendance data for programs was analyzed quantitatively. Attendance statistics were compared between programs that were developed with teen input and those that weren't, and between programs that were promoted through a variety of media types and those with fewer means of promotion. Attendance data was also evaluated across types of promotion and types of content. These comparisons were done to determine how means of promotion, teen input, and program content affect program attendance. The qualitative data will prove valuable as well in determining best practices because the librarians may have more detailed explanations for patterns in the data that cannot be gleaned from the numbers alone.

Together, the numeric and verbal information should indicate patterns of successful practices among this group of librarians. These practices may be helpful in predicting patterns of success in other public libraries, although due to the small sample size they will not be generalizable.

Interview Results

Finding Program Ideas

In response to the question, “Where do you get your ideas for programs?” Librarian 1, who works at a main library in a county-wide system in Florida, emphasized collaborating with peers and finding timely themes: “We have a team of people that do teen programming here ... our youth department for the whole library system is centralized, so we all work together.” She explained that during monthly meetings, they “look for things that are like timely ... like if a movie is coming out or if a book is being turned into a movie,” and, “We try to make things time sensitive [and] sensitive to pop culture.”

Librarian 2, who works at a branch library in a different Florida county system than 1, explained that her library system also has regular meetings, but mentioned following the lead of the Collaborative Summer Library Program, and did not mention keeping an eye out for trends like blockbuster movies. This librarian, though, also mentioned seeking teen input: “Sometimes I’ll ask the kids what they want to do... With the teenagers as opposed to the little guys, you have to switch gears real quickly. Cause they’ll lose interest, or they just look at you like, ‘Well I’m not doing that.’”

Librarian 3, who works at a municipal library in Florida, mentioned collaboration on a broader scale as well, indicating that she looks to professional listservs and library journals for ideas. She explained that in her past work as a teacher, “the mantra was beg, borrow, and steal, and that applies to librarians as well ... So if I hear about another library having a really cool program, I totally co-opt it and make it ours, too.” Librarian 3 also alluded to coming up with program ideas as an individual creative process, saying “Plus my crazy brain sometimes pitches in.” Somewhat surprisingly, none of the other librarians mentioned coming up with original programming ideas, although that certainly doesn’t mean that they don’t.

Librarian 4, who works in a main library in a county-wide system in North Carolina, also mentioned large-scale professional collaboration, specifically conference sessions about teen programming and communicating with librarians from neighboring library systems. She also mentioned finding ideas online and through contact with local presenters and artists.

Librarian 5, whose library is a regional branch of a county system in North Carolina, said, laughing, “Anywhere I can.” She pointed out the fact that every library is

different, and that programs that worked at another library she worked at don't necessarily work at her current one. Unlike the others, she was more critical of generalized teen programming advice, and explained "You have some of those programs that they always say in the magazine, 'Oh, solid gold program, start an anime club' ... I tried an anime club. Nope!" She went on, "Part of what I've been doing is trying to figure out what's going to work for them, which means basically throwing everything at the wall and seeing what sticks." She, like others before her, did encourage working with colleagues to find good ideas: "Best thing you can do is usually talk to your colleagues. Read." She also mentions online social networking resources like Pinterest, and following trends like Librarian 1 mentioned: "I tried to do a steampunk jewelry thing last year, and my kids haven't heard about steampunk yet so they weren't quite grooving on it. In about two years, I have a feeling they'll be all over it."

Librarian 6, also coming from a regional branch library in a different North Carolina county system, said she looks far and wide for ideas, too: "A whole bunch of places, online ... You just kind of search around." She, like Librarian 1, follows trends like movies inspired by popular books. She also mentioned getting a lot of ideas for programs from her teen advisory board, and from professional publications, although she said, "Sometimes I find some stuff in *VOYA*, but very rarely." Finally, as others before her, she talks about collaboration within her library system: "All the teen libraries get together about like every two months and we talk about different program ideas." She also mentioned that sometimes programs are system-wide, so her library as a regional library is expected to put them on.

Teen Input Levels

The librarians all acknowledged receiving some level of teen input, but these levels varied. On this topic, Librarian 5 said, “You certainly want to try and get the kids to give you feedback, but the kids frequently don’t want to give you feedback, or the kids who give you feedback are the kids from, like, your teen advisory group or your volunteers who have perfectly good ideas, but they’re not necessarily the ideas that are going to draw in the kids who are stuck here after school for two hours or three hours every day.” She also pays attention to what programs teens attend in droves, and tries to get verbal input at the individual level from teens who attend them. One idea she has is to ask teens to lead programs themselves, but she has not put this into practice yet besides one program that is still in the planning stages. Librarian 6 has found a lot of success when she puts the power to plan and lead programs in the hands of her teens. She has a “very active” teen advisory board, which she tries to limit to about 30 participants, and says, “At one time they were planning maybe a program a month and presenting it. Mostly programs for teens.”

Librarian 5 says that her teens do not offer many program ideas, but have other ideas that she is encouraging them to pursue: “My teen advisory group has been a little skittish about being too direct on programming. They have some other very interesting ideas like trying to do partnerships with local charities, and doing...book displays and informational displays around that, which I think is a great idea, though, it’s purely on them...So I’m trying to push them to kind of move forward on that...and trying to see how much I can get them to take ownership of some of that.” She also laments that some

of the programming that is in demand (she gives the example of baby-sitter training) is cost prohibitive.

Although she sometimes struggles to get programming ideas from her teens, she says, “I try and pick their brains where I can, sneak questions on volunteer applications, and...even sign-ups for programs...And sometimes they answer and most of the time they don’t.” She continues, “I remember my youth services course and, ‘Get as much feedback from teens as possible!’ except for the part where occasionally it’s like pulling teeth with cooked spaghetti to get feedback from your teens...But the ones that you form a relationship with will tell you, and that’s usually a good thing.” She says that they will also sometimes comment on the quality of a program during or after it in conversation.

Librarian 1 had less direct teen input in programming ideas, and said that her teen advisory board was more likely to participate in movie-making contests and other promotional activities, but actually don’t plan or attend other library programming so much. Although Librarian 2 does not have a formal teen advisory board, she seeks teen input “Quite a bit. I use them as a sounding board because, you know, making them do anything is usually not a good idea ... And what works one year doesn’t work the next. So I, yeah I do, I ask them a lot what they want to do and try to during the summer, plan things out with them.” Librarian 3 seeks both formal and informal teen input, from her teen advisory board and from regular patrons. Librarian 4 says that she seeks teen input mostly in the form of options that she gives her teens to vote on. She gave the example of programs a local artist could put on -- the teens were asked to choose from a list of possibilities.

Promotion

The six librarians interviewed each employed between five and eight means of promotion. There was some variety, but all of them reported using word-of-mouth and most also used fliers, outreach to schools, and the Internet. Specifically, Librarian 1 reported using a print magazine, “not that we think teens read it, but maybe their mom will read it.” And, “For more special events, we have a Facebook account and a Twitter for teens.” Her library has “a main Facebook account, but we have a separate one for teenagers, and so ... we make events on the Facebook page.” Using the Facebook page, they can send out invitations directly to teens on Facebook. She also mentions outreach to schools: “Sometimes we’ll do programs during the day and we try and get classes to come in or groups of kids to come in, and then we’ll market that to teachers or librarians, and we have a list of local schools and people we know have transportation and come to our programs often.”

Regarding effectiveness of these methods, she said, “I think the most successful is word of mouth and that’s probably easiest with our teen volunteers, and if they can get someone to come with them, that’s probably like the most effective, direct way...If the volunteer comes in we have a chance to tell them about it, maybe give them something in person.” She continued, “Least effective, is probably just putting it on our website. I don’t think many teenagers, like search our website for stuff to do.” She explained that the website includes an online calendar with all the teen events. She also mentioned a defunct teen email newsletter because, “I don’t think a lot of teens use email, so when we asked them for their email they were like, ‘What...?’ I think a lot of them use Facebook to communicate.” Although her library does use Twitter to promote programs, she said

that she thinks, “not that many teens use Twitter, and I don’t think actually that many of our followers are teens but I kind of use it more as like for people that would be interested in teens...I post a lot of stuff about, oh, teens and videogames or teens and reading, or books for your teenager. Like, there are still people that are invested in teens that might follow it.” So, for her, promotion of teen programs includes promotion to adults with an interest in teens.

Librarian 2 had also observed certain weaknesses in her past promotional methods, saying she doesn’t use “the newspaper quite so much anymore because, you know, nobody can afford to pay for ads.” She also is skeptical about the effectiveness of signage, saying, “People don’t read the signs. But if the mothers sit and talk to each other, either this mother will bring another mother, or this kid tells another kid he did some fun activity, so I think word of mouth is the most successful.” She says that now her promotion is “mostly through the county, online...All of our stuff is promoted on there. And word of mouth.” But regarding her online presence, she said, “We still do it because it’s not an investment, but anything that we’re investing, we can now use that towards crafts or supplies.”

She also said that they have had incredible success when the children’s librarian, with whom she collaborates for the summer programs, “goes to the schools every year... She speaks to them. She brings along some of the crafts. She’ll do a craft with the kids. Last year we did Egypt, which was so much fun, and she’s very artistic, and she brought a little sarcophagus that she had made, and it was really, really top notch.” This in-person outreach to schools has been a great success: “We’ve gotten to the point where we don’t even advertise summer anymore!”

Librarian 3 was also moving away from print: “Yeah, paper is definitely the least successful and Facebook has been by far the most.” She explained, “I used to use the paper fliers although I really don’t anymore because I found them completely ineffective... We have the Evanced program... It’s sort of like a master calendar of events on the computer and so that’s one of the ways and it’s usually more for parents when they want to find out what programs are available for their children.” Like Librarian 1, she is reaching out to teens and parents in different ways. She added, “I use Facebook a lot and I will post an event notice and a lot of the teens are my friends, so I invite them to the event,” which is also similar to Librarian 1. Her library also has a main Facebook page and a teen Facebook page. Although she says Facebook is her best bet for promotion, she laments, “I think sometimes they are getting inundated by event notifications and so they’ll tend to ignore them, and that’s been one of the most frustrating things is I’ll send an e-vite and they’ll say ‘Yes,’ but they won’t show or they won’t ever respond so I have absolutely no idea who’s coming. But, it has been way more effective because I do get a general idea. And requiring registration is sometimes a good way because they have to go onto the calendar and register.”

She, too, has found success in word-of-mouth promotion, but has had less with school outreach than Librarian 2 (although she didn’t mention going in person the way Librarian 2’s colleague did): “I’ll have them do over the morning announcements at the local schools. But, every time I’ve done that and I’ve asked the teens, ‘Did you hear the morning announcement?’ they’re all like, ‘No, we never listen to the announcement.’ So [I] kind of stopped doing that, because I’m thinking, well why am I going to this trouble? They’re not even listening to the announcements.”

Librarian 4 agrees that word-of-mouth is important, but puts emphasis on knowing teens individually: “I think the most successful ones are the more personal individualized ones, I mean when I tell someone about a program in person or if I email them to let them know there’s a program that I think would interest them in particular...they tend to appreciate that.” She adds, “Just having the teens recruit their own friends is awesome too.”

Like Librarian 2, she found success in collaboration with schools. When her library hosted a theatrical performance last year, local teachers encouraged their students to go and even offered extra credit. Regarding this partnership, she says, “Collaborating with the teachers really helped last year too, so I’d say that’s a really effective way too,” and her attendance at that program, as described later, reflects that success. On the other hand, she, too, is skeptical of fliers, adding, “I’m not sure how effective fliers are. I mean...they all help a little bit, all the different methods help a little bit I think. But then, I can’t say I pay a lot of attention to fliers, and people say teens don’t read signs.”

Librarian 5 also emphasizes the personal side of promotion: “What I have noticed is that teens are much more likely to come to programs if you invite them specifically and just say, ‘Hey, we’re doing this program and I know you kind of like manga so we’re doing this candy sushi program and you ought to give it a try, you know, and just make it personal to them and they’re a lot more likely to spread the word if it’s something they’re interested in.” She elaborates on her interest in teens’ opinions, saying, “Letting your teen advisory board know, you know, what’s going on, soliciting ideas from them because that makes them a lot more willing to promote it, but also you know you identify teens who are social hubs, which means they like to talk to other teens a lot, which can be

problematic occasionally for behavior inside the library, but can be very efficient for spreading news about programming.” This librarian is the only participant who mentioned specifically seeking out teens who will be the best at bringing in others. She says one of the most important things she can do is “getting to know them, or at least some of them, and getting an idea of some of their interests, particular interests for a given teen.”

She also takes this personal approach with outreach to schools: “I have teachers who will post stuff at their school or give good word of mouth ... Basically, I just spend a lot of time talking about it.” And one more way she reaches out to individuals is when she walks through the library just before a program: “We do not have a P.A. system. It will be easier...when I will just be able to go on and announce you know, ‘Teen program is starting in five minutes...’ I’ve gone in and given the teens a hard time and I’m like, ‘Really? Why are you here?... We have a program. There’s food. I mean, pizza, really. And you’re here?’ And they’re [like], ‘What? Food? Where?’ ... I wish I had some sort of magical social networking tip to offer, but I don’t.” On the topic of social networking, she has this to say: “They really are very much into Facebook, very much into Twitter, very much in commenting on each other’s actions in real time, which is the most oddly meta thing to bear witness to, occasionally...But it does not seem to translate at this point in time to engendering interest to library programming. It may change in the future, maybe we haven’t found the right approach yet. I’m hoping we can make our website a lot more teen friendly, rather than have it just sort of be this page.”

And she, too, demonstrates an awareness of what reaches teens and what reaches parents: “So, the teens aren’t the ones who read [the monthly newsletter]. It’s their

parents that we're counting on. And, sometimes that works, sometimes that doesn't." She continues, "Well, I think if I just left it alone on the calendar or just put up fliers without talking to anybody, I don't know how much interest it would generate.

Regarding methods she has since abandoned, she, too, mentioned paper: "Oh, heavens. I used a lot more paper for a while, because I had this idea that if I just littered the place...that would get people's attention, and it didn't seem to. Or, it only seemed to selectively. I discovered ...there's really no point in putting fliers out for the kids who are here locally much more than at the very beginning of the week. So put them out on Monday for a program on Thursday. Otherwise, they stop seeing them."

Librarian 6 reaches out to schools in a less personal way than 5 does. She says that she sends emails and flier packets to local schools, but that she stopped when she decided that it wasn't getting enough results. She explains, "The teens actually have to make it to the school library, and they actually have to look at the bulletin board, and then they actually have to pay enough attention to remember to find out more information at the library. So I don't know how much that actually works. The media specialists do like...to at least know what's going on, so if there's some stuff that I think they would care about, I will send it to them. And sometimes they'll push it on their teens, which is nice." She says that emailing teens has been the most effective way to bring them into her library. She also mentioned a new online calendar her library has: "It's customizable where you can pick the audience and there is one for teen, and you can also choose your library. It's pretty hard to navigate. It's relatively new...I don't think my teens even know it exists. So yeah, so I stick with the email." She adds "I think that the website is probably the worst for teens. I don't think they go to it ever."

Most Successful Programs

Librarian 1's most-attended program is Battle of the Bands, for which her library has between two hundred and three hundred attendees every year. She says, "They've been doing it for several years here...I want to say this will be like our ninth one, so that definitely helps... There's YouTube... historic YouTube videos about it, and so...sometimes people will tell us they want to do it because they saw the YouTube video." She added, "We don't have YouTube videos of all our teen programs...so you know that's definitely something kind of special." The program is a contest for local teenage bands. Regarding promotion, she says "The bands themselves do a lot of word-of-mouth promotion. You know... if you're a band in high school, you obviously, like, heavily plan their gigs and do other things and that helps." She explains that she sends out information to high school music teachers and librarians to recruit bands. She also has a promotional partnership with a group that has a website to promote local music. She adds, "We don't have promotional partners for...every program we do." Attendance is also encouraged with prizes, and she holds the event right after school gets out for the summer, "So it's kind of like our event to kick off our teen summer reading program." She says that surveys they've conducted have shown that they get bands from a number of nearby schools, which helps increase attendance.

Another big program her library had that involved live bands and good timing was having a very popular wizard rock band come to perform. Like Librarian 3, her programs benefited from the excitement surrounding the final movie in the Harry Potter series. This was also near the time that a Harry Potter convention was held at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter theme park in central Florida. She emphasized that

timing was a big factor in this success: “We’ve had Wizard Rock bands in the past, before, and they do attract a lot of people, but it wasn’t anything like this. I think timing is really important, you know, being a part of what’s going on and what’s on people’s minds.”

Other successes she’s had have included her ani-manga “mini-con” which includes a drawing contest and other activities. She said that she has a regular group that meets to do anime and manga-related activities, so it sounds like this program’s consistency helps attendance. She pointed out that contests are a good way to bring people into an event because they will want to know who won.

Librarian 1 said that these events do not have significant teen input in the planning stages, but that there is a “teen bash for our teen volunteers and the teen advisory board will like pick the theme for that... And give ideas for what they want to do at those events, like what they want to have, like if they want to have food [and] make up awards like names for each other and stuff like that.” She also said that “Occasionally we do...kind of more informal surveying of the kids that are here after school, and kind of ask them what they want to do next.” One example she gave is that a series of art programs, “It’s a grant-funded program and basically we bring in like an artist a month, and have them teach the kids their art form. And we recently had some options...An art teacher that we worked with gave us several ideas for projects and we kind of like asked the group of kids that are here... ‘What do you want to do out of all these projects?’ and we were kind of surprised by what they picked...It’s not what we thought was necessarily the coolest, but hey if you want to do it, we’ll do it,” so teens in her library have some limited opportunities to direct programming.

For Librarian 2, a rule of thumb is “Anything to do with food. They love the food. They love the cooking.” At food programs, she said, “We get twenty-thirty kids, sometimes, a day. Which is a lot for this size town.” She adds that some come as volunteers: “They like to be helpful, anything like that...They like working with the little kids.”

Another popular event at her library is a scavenger hunt. This program involves teens working in teams and is put on regularly, like some of Librarian 1’s more highly-attended programs. Her teens also enjoy other regular events, including Mardi Gras, where they make masks, and “Pie Day,” which was an idea the teens had years ago and has turned into a regular celebration. She tells the story: “The kids were on the computer one day and they said, ‘Oh, today’s national sandwich day!’ ...If you go on the computer, there’s a whole list of things...So, they go, ‘Can we do a pie day?’ And that was, what, four or five years ago?” Library 2 has a big turnout for this program every year and has since also established Pancake Day as a regular event. She explained that these programs are not terribly expensive to put on--the materials for making the Mardi Gras masks have lasted for years, and she mentioned that kids will come back and be thrilled to see that she has kept some of their work from programs past. Of course, the Mardi Gras program also involved traditional food. She says, “So if you can plan the holiday, the craft, and the food all together, you’re good to go.”

She also talks about teen’s desires for artistic self-expression: “They like their own, creative, ‘I made this mask. This is mine.’ They do. They love that. And every kid can do it.” She also observes that “That is one of my few programs that I don’t have to change on the demographics of the group...You can always put that one out with success,

and not really have to change it.” This comment suggests that she, like others have mentioned, keeps an eye on what interests her patrons on an individual level, and how it changes, or doesn’t, from year to year. One surprisingly simple program that she has found success with is making pipe-cleaner structures: “One of their favorite things to do is those pipe cleaner figures. Some of those things are probably eight years old,” she said, indicating some she had on display in her office, “They just think those are the greatest things ever. I can dump a pile of pipe cleaners on the table and they’ll play with them forever.”

Librarian 3 reports that “Most of the really super successful ones have been tied into some sort of literary event, like when Percy Jackson was still in everybody’s forefront we had a Percy Jackson day and that was very well attended.” Same with *The Hunger Games*. For Harry Potter’s last movie, Librarian 3 asked for extra help from interested teens: “Well, I approached some teens who I knew were huge Harry Potter fans and I said, ‘I need some serious help putting on this summer. How do you feel about helping me plan the programs and execute the programs? You get volunteer hours, you get a little badge that says Dumbledore’s Army, you represent a house, you win house points. It was just a huge production, and it was so fun, and Dumbledore’s Army had a great time helping me out with that.” She said she would not have been able to do all the programs without the help of these teens.

Like Librarians 1 and 2, she has also found success in recognizing successful programs and repeating them regularly. She also had success at summer video game nights, but says “That’s been a weak point in programming, and I need to work on that.” She has found that there is a demand for more crafty programs, but has not done a lot of

those yet because she does not do crafts much herself. She also mentioned the financial commitment of organizing a craft event and the risk of only having a couple kids show up when you've bought supplies for many more.

Librarian 4, like Librarian 1, found success in partnerships outside of the library. Her most well-attended program was a theatrical event with outside performers and promotional support from local schools. She said, "It seems like the programs that were outside performers or teachers come in seem to do better than the more homemade ones did." She also talks about the need to tap into the passions and interests of the teens. She gave an example of a chess club she led at her previous job, whose success she attributed to "the energy of one kid who was, you know, just really passionate... That did really well for the two years I was there. I think it still exists there." Contrary to common assumptions about teen programming, Librarian 4 said, "To tell the truth... getting input from kids doesn't help as much as I would expect." She explained, "They'll vote for a movie, but it doesn't seem to guarantee at all that they'll actually come to it. I don't know if maybe I need to give them more... ask more questions or get more in depth input... I would think it would make more of a difference... Kids will say 'Oh, we should have a Halloween party...' but then they still... won't come to it, and I don't get that." She adds that one benefit she has seen from teen input is that "At least it still makes me feel more confident than just planning it all myself."

Librarian 5 has had huge attendance success with her video game programs. She says they take place in a big room, with several stations set up, "It's noisy, and the kids will come in and do their homework while their friends play games." The program atmosphere sounds casual, and she mentions that they have kids come and go during it.

Another popular program is the “Zombie Cupcake Apocalypse...They decorate and I get the most disgusting things for them like, you know, gummy eyeballs and worms and you name it...And they make these intricate, absolutely bilious looking cupcakes, which they proceed to scarf down with great glee.” She describes crafting programs as unpredictable, and has trouble gauging how many teens to expect at any given craft program.

She elaborates, “We get so many kids, but so many odd things can influence them. You know, if something happened at school that day they may be really restless and they may want to talk to each other so there may be a lot of going in and out, and hanging out in the back... Or, you know, Spring comes and they start getting all super flirty and the program that sounded great like a week and half ago is complete paled in comparison to the guy they’ve been sitting next to in class for most of the school year who suddenly is the cutest thing they’ve ever seen...There are so many intangibles, and younger teens have different interests than older teens.” As a reaction to these differences, she is trying to split up some of her programming, to do more young-teen-oriented programming on weekdays and more older-teen-oriented programming on weekends -- a practice none of the other librarians mentioned.

She also mentions the significant positive effect of offering teens food: “My last program of the summer reading program was trying desserts from around the world and I made, I’m like if you put something on your plate you have to try it. So I got tamarind candy and sesame candy, you know stuff from all over the place along with more traditional stuff, you know, spice cookies from Bavaria, you know what have you. So I raided all kinds of little local shops. Um, that one went over pretty well and again, note, it involves food.”

Librarian 6, as several others have mentioned, finds that book-to-movie parties are a big hit. She also has had success with murder mysteries and volunteer opportunities. Her library has three big volunteering events during the summer, where forty teens come and do various tasks around the library before it opens, for two hours. She says that teens in here area are “really involved in academics and in trying to beef up...their college application, so they do a lot of volunteering.” So this program success she sees reflecting what she knows about her population’s needs. She also mentions that her teen advisory board plays a part in planning and implementing all of the above-mentioned programs.

Elaborating on the Murder Mystery events, she says that they have some kits where everyone gets to act out a character, and that the ones with props are the biggest hits, but she also says that “in the past, my teen advisory board has picked a topic and then written a murder mystery, and so they act in it, and then the people that show up have to figure it out. It’s a little chaotic, it’s a little ridiculous, but they do it...It’s fun. And they really did like it.” This, like the mass volunteering event, brings in droves of teens and happens outside of the library’s normal hours.

Alluding again to the academic focus of her teens, she says, “The other one that’s popular around here actually would be anything related to the college application process, SAT especially. We offered a practice SAT through Kaplan recently where they came, the teens came and did a full four-hour SAT and then two weeks later got it back graded, and then they went over stuff. We had thirty-five and that was because I capped it.” These programs, though, teens are not involved in planning.

Least Successful Programs

Librarian 1 said that she struggles with bringing teens into computer-related programming. She offered computer classes during Teen Tech Week which had low attendance. About this she said, “I don’t know if it’s because it’s not a regularly reoccurring kind of thing; I think that would be part of the problem, but I also think sometimes...you really have to attract people to do something they could do on their own...I think a lot of that is, especially for teens, socializing.” The difference is, “You could probably learn a computer program on your own. You could be at your house, by yourself, but a lot of what attracts them to library programs is getting to hang out with people, so I think you can’t ever forget that social aspect of it.” None of the other teen librarians mentioned the significance of this so directly.

Librarian 3 told a story of one successful program not necessarily leading to another. She had a 70’s-themed party that was a hit, but the 80’s one she followed up with had only two attendees. Unlike with the Harry Potter programming, she mentions that she worked on the program independently: “I’m like a really big fan of 80s stuff, so I didn’t really ask for help, I, you know, combed the thrift stores for vintage clothing; I asked people for donations of vintage, 80s artifacts I guess, put together the music; I borrowed my dad’s old video game system from the 80s. All this work, and two kids show up, and I was so heartbroken.” She says that this program was promoted mostly by fliers because it was before her library had a Facebook page.

She says that she also had trouble bringing kids into craft programs initially (although she did acknowledge a new demand for them). When she got her position, she tried putting on already-established craft programs, but found that they had low attendance. But, she says, “The attendance for teen programs is typically low anyway, at

least, in my area. I don't know if it's something I'm doing wrong or if that's just the way it is with teens, but I've noticed that [these] teens are overburdened with stuff they have... academic commitments, they have all kind of extracurricular activities, sports, church, and so I'm competing with a lot with these overachieving kids, so I'm grateful for the ones I can get in to do anything." This is an interesting contrast to the success Librarian 6 attributes to having overachieving students as patrons, but she, too, acknowledged struggling to bring them in for fun programs during the school year. Librarian 3's experience with academic programs, however, has also been disappointing: "I collaborated with the State Department of Education, and they came out, and she was like this fount of information on how kids can get free money for college and I promoted that via Facebook, via fliers, I delivered fliers to the guidance offices of [two local schools]...and I just did not have the turnout the I expected for something so useful, so I'm kind of wondering how to get that in there, maybe next year." She also had low attendance for free SAT/ACT practice tests, which brought so many into Library 6--only seven attended the program that could have accommodated 25.

Librarian 4 has also found craft programs to be unreliable at bringing in teens. She has decided to bring in outside instructors as a change of pace: "Actually, they're going to be different starting next month cause someone else is going to be coming in to do them who's an actual art teacher." She says that she promotes these programs mostly with fliers, and sometimes by contacting parents. She is puzzled, though, because "the kids, when they come they seem to really enjoy it, but they don't always come." She speculates that "maybe part of it is that I'm not artistic myself at all, so I don't feel that confident about how it's really going to turn out or...how to comment on their art and

like get them to...talk about it the way [the guest instructor] is. So I feel like, maybe that's part of the problem is my attitude about it." This is also consistent with Librarian 3's struggles to bring teens into craft programs, and the admission that she is not particularly crafty herself. She adds, "It hasn't been a complete failure, I mean they... did valentines for the seniors last year and hopefully we'll do that again in February. So some good's come out of it."

Regarding difficult programs, Librarian 5 says, "I had a really hard time getting teens to come to programming for summer reading. And part of it is I think they didn't care for the theme. And you try and make the best of whatever weird theme comes your way for summer reading...and part of it is once again schools are out, how do you reach the teens? And figuring out who actually lives in your neighborhood and when is actually a good time." She, like Librarian 4, has received mixed messages from teens: "They will say, 'Oh yeah, we'd love to do something regularly early on a Wednesday,' but then nobody comes for it."

One program in particular that she struggled to bring teens in for was an adinkra cloth craft, which she was looking forward to and had heard was successful at other libraries, but only one teen came. She says, though, "I'm going to be doing that one again in February for African American history month, and I will be marketing it as part of African American history month, and we'll see if that goes." So she is looking into alternative marketing methods. She says, "That was kind of a bummer and part of that, I think, was honestly finding the audience for it." Regarding finding the right audience, she commented, "Don't believe that boys don't like to do crafts. We've been...working on gender equity in programming. Science programs are a lot of fun. I'm trying to do more

science based stuff. Boys actually like crafts. Particularly if it's not all floral and glitter, but the first time I did a Christmas card, well holiday card wrapping paper kind of thing, about forty percent of my attendees were boys, and they were in there going for the glitter and the little glue-on jewels and whatever just as much as anybody else at the program. Don't always assume you have to program 'boy programs' to get boys in." This speaks to knowing your audience rather than falling back on stereotypes. Librarian 2 also mentioned having boys in craft programs, and says that, although perhaps "the girls are more apt to do things than the boys...I've taught three or four boys to crochet and they still do it."

Librarian 6 also struggles with craft program attendances: "The ones that I cannot get to fly over here are craft programs, for some reason, and I love doing craft programs. I can get about fifteen, maybe 20 to show up in the summer, but during the school year, never." So, it may have to do with timing, but this suggests that Librarians 3 and 4 may be too hard on themselves for their non-craftiness. She says that for these program, she advertises the same as any other, but that teens are not usually involved with planning or implementing them, but that "Whenever I ask them what kind of programs they want, they always talk about craft programs, and then don't show up," so she, too, gets mixed messages from her teens. She says, "I think the idea of learning how to do something is more fun. I don't know why."

Methods of Evaluation

Although attendance is a commonly gathered statistic, many of the librarians interviewed are skeptical that attendance is of great value in measuring success. Although they all expressed a desire to reach more, rather than fewer, teens, many also

acknowledged that library programming has more important, intangible ways of being successful.

Librarian 1 had the following to say: “I don’t think attendance is the most valuable measure of success because...I don’t think attendance measures the value that people are getting from the program...You know, we could have a hundred people watch a movie, but is that experience as valuable as a program where they, like, meet somebody new and do something they’d never done before?” She says, though, that her library does use software to maintain attendance statistics. They also have surveys that include questions like, “Would you recommend this to a friend?” which they use to measure participant satisfaction.

Librarian 2 had a similar sentiment. “For me,” she says, “I think it’s more the creativity that they’ve achieved.” She considers a program a success, “even if you only have three or four kids, if they really, really got into it, and they had a ball, and they made some product that they are so terribly proud of.” She continues, “So for me, attendance is a measure of success, but...it’s more about the individual kids how much fun did they have [and] were they able to create things.” She says smaller kids are fairly easy-going about programs, “But teens are a tougher crowd,” so she concerns herself with how much fun they had, how creative they got to be, and “how proud they are of something.” She says, “That’s my measure of a successful program.”

Librarian 3 was a little more concerned with attendance. She says, “I think attendance is important because you’re putting so much money into a program, sometimes, and my own personal time.” And points out, “If I devote so much money or time to preparing a program, that’s less time I’m spending working on collection

development or working on the circulation desk or anything like that, so I think it's a good indicator that there's a payoff in the amount of kids that I'm servicing." She acknowledges, though, some of the intangible benefits beyond the numbers: "There's also a tradeoff; if I have just a couple of kids come, but they're really getting something out of the program, they're either learning how to knit, or they're really enjoying the movie that we selected for them, then it's, for me, it's less of a negative thing. It's more of a positive experience." She mentions, though, her awareness of teens' concerns about being the only attendees, "I feel bad when the kids who do come, they're like, 'Wow, there's hardly anybody here,' but if they're having a good time and they're getting something out of the program, they don't even notice it, and I'm ok with that," so quality programming is a way to mitigate that problem. She also alludes to the practical need to have good statistics to offer to library administration: "Because I answer to somebody, I'm a little bit nervous that all the effort I'm putting in is having like a less positive outcome, I guess, so it is a factor; it's not the only factor, though, for sure."

Librarian 4 was also ambivalent about attendance. She says, "I pay a lot of attention to that...It's hard to know because...at one conference I went to, one of the librarians was saying if you get three kids to come to a young adult program, you know, that's great. You should be proud of that, because they had to take time out of their day and find transportation to come to it, but then...I don't think everyone feels that way." She also, says, though, in terms of determining program quality from attendance, "If people don't keep coming to a program, it's kind of like they're...voting with their feet." So, for attendance, she said, "It's worth paying attention to, but it's not everything." She evaluates her programs both based on attendance, verbal feedback from teens, and "what

they made or did... and just how involved they seem to be, whether they come to the next thing that's planned, and if they ask questions about what else there is."

Librarian 5 responded, "I don't necessarily think attendance is always the best measure, because you will have teens kind of wander in and out, or it's a program that just feels kind of canned or generic or whatever, and then there are programs where you may only get five or six or ten kids in, but they really like it and it really enthuses them about the library...and you feel like there's more of a lasting impact...So sometimes you balance out bodies in the room versus the actual impact your programs have had." She concedes, though, "Realistically speaking, you want both. And it helps to have both. Because one helps you keep your funding and the other one helps you keep your sanity." She adds, "I think sometimes that you really measure it in terms of how much fun the kids have, whether it overcomes some of their social boundaries so that groups who might not always hang out with each other are willing to share a room because they're interested enough in...the movie you're showing or the craft you're doing." She was the only librarian to mention bringing together diverse attendees as a specific programming goal. Like Librarian 3, she comments about the difference between her own perspective and the perspective of those she reports to: "Usually statistics are what people who need to crunch numbers need and the how much it fosters a connection with your teens is usually what teen librarians need."

Librarian 6 said that program attendance statistics are actually influencing how positions in her library system are being reassigned: "Currently [this] county is in the middle of redefining their librarian positions...Right now, my job was sixth grade and up. What they've decided...is that the numbers for teen program and also circulation do not

warrant a full time person in the regionals, so I will be doing third grade and up.” She said that the statistics they’re using are system-wide and not necessarily representative of what’s happening in her own branch.

As Librarian 4 mentioned, Librarian 6 says, “Traditionally speaking, everybody believes that lower numbers for teen programs are ok, like if you get five for a book club it’s really exciting, as opposed to a kids’ book club where you might have to cap it at twenty. Traditionally, I have been excited.” Regarding her own success measures, she says that her library has “started doing this on our signup spreadsheets: we’ve got the maximum number that we’re ok with, and then a waiting list. And then in there we have to mark down where our goal is, so like for my high school book club, my goal is seven. I’ll let fifteen people come in and then do a waiting list, but I never get that. My goal is seven, so if I reach my goal, then I consider my program successful. She also says, in a more abstract way, she considers whether she felt like she was wasting her time, and gives the example of the labor-intensiveness of putting on craft programs, which Librarian 3 also alluded to, but she also says that sometimes even small numbers at craft programs can still feel like a good use of her time: “At one point I did a crochet series where I taught teens how to make granny squares, and then we crocheted them all together to make a blanket and then donated the blanket. I had three. Three teens that came for five weeks and made all the squares and put them all together. So is three a good measure for programming? Maybe not, but those three teens? Loved it. They loved it. And actually one of the teens, she was thirteen at the time, I think. She just got into UNC and sent me an email thanking me for all my help. She’s vice president of the teen advisory board right now. And she started because of that one program. So yeah there’s

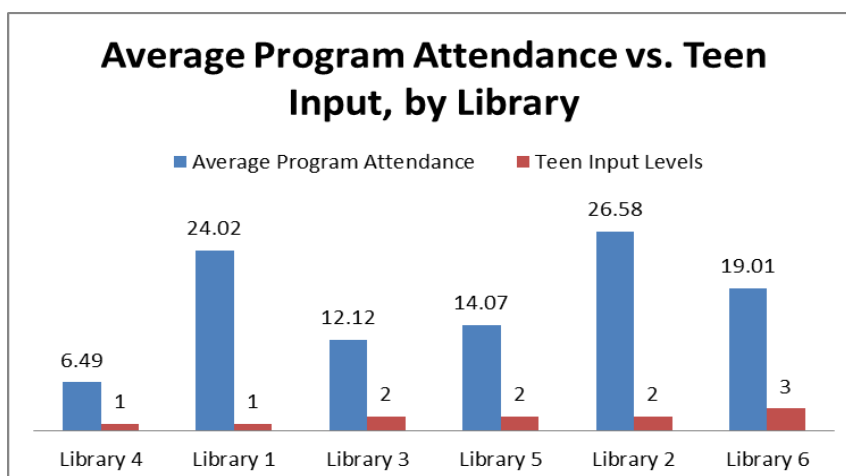
definitely a qualitative element, which is purely anecdotal, so it's a little hard to justify...if the system is looking solely at numbers, which this one now is."

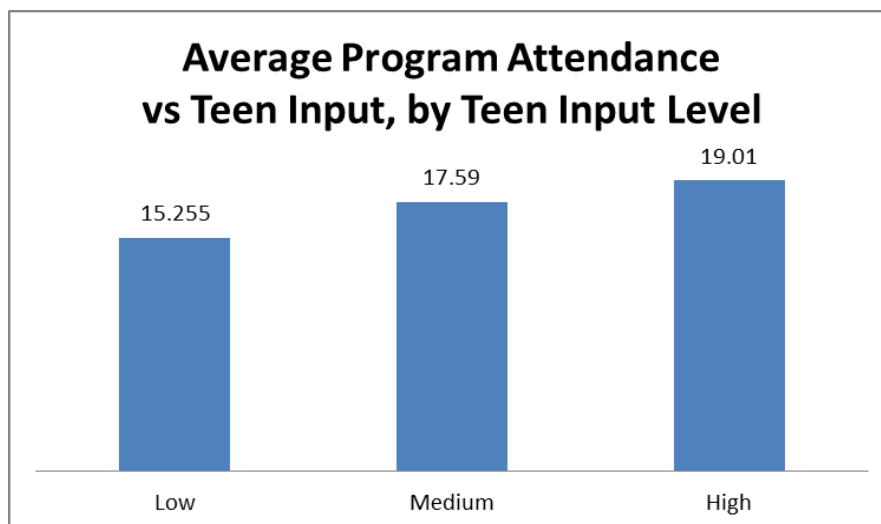
Attendance Data Results

The attendance data provided by the librarians, in conjunction with the interview data, reveal some common threads, but also some discrepancies in factors that positively or negatively influence teen attendance.

Teen Input

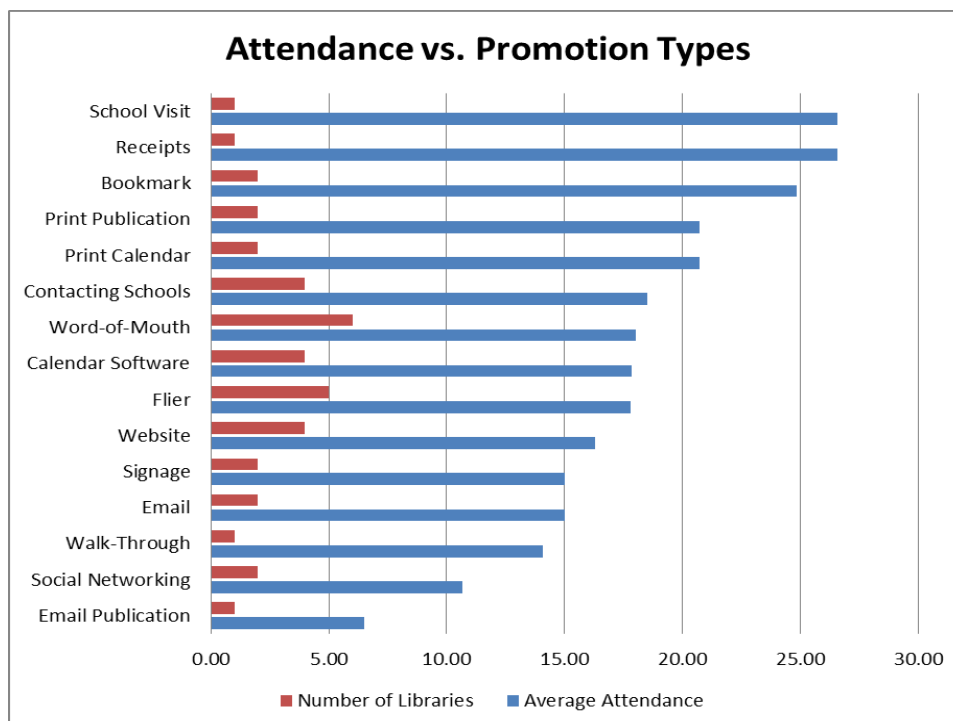
In order to examine the effects of teen input, I used the interview responses to categorize levels of teen input at every library. I consider "High" input to describe libraries where the teens are invited to plan and put on programs themselves, "Medium" input to be those in which teens are formally asked to suggest program ideas, or assist with putting together programs, and "Low" input as those in which teens are offered choices to vote for, or only asked informally about what they would like at particular programs. In the first graph, "High" input is designated by the number three, and "Low" is level one. This categorization is limited, as it is possible that some interviewees may not have thoroughly described the input they get from teens in their interviews, which is the material that is used to make this categorization.





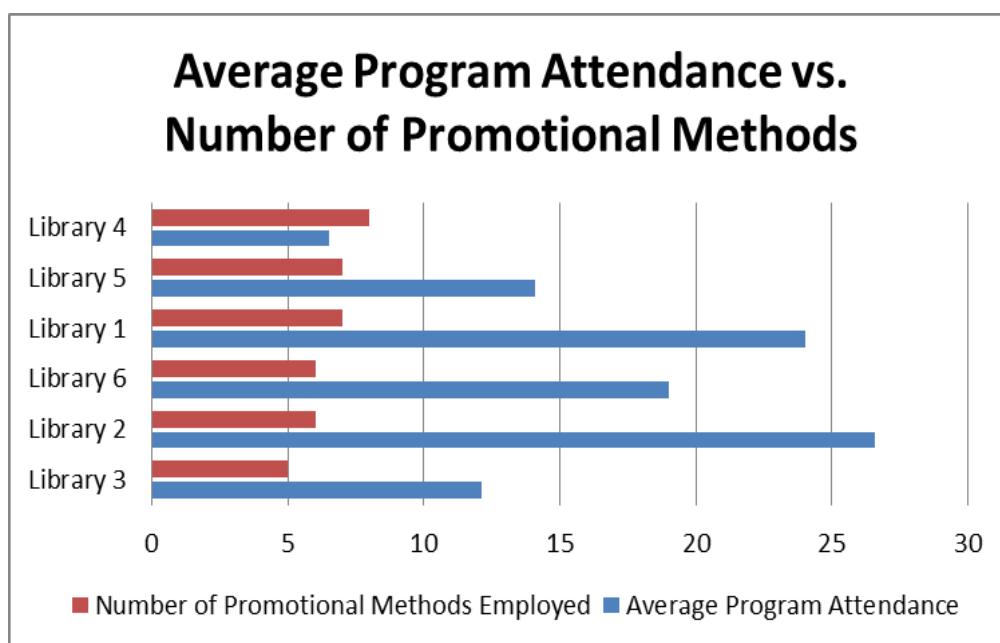
Although the differences are not dramatic, the graph that combines the libraries' average attendance in each category does suggest a tendency for teens to attend programs in which they have greater input and/or responsibility (or those run by librarians that sometimes offer them this empowerment).

Promotion



The chart on the previous page shows the average attendance for programs with each type of promotion mentioned by the interviewees. It also shows how many libraries reported using each method. The only method reported by every participating librarian was word-of-mouth promotion, which the results suggest is only about as effective as the other methods. The most extreme examples, though, come from means of promotion that are only used by one library and therefore may not be as meaningful as those which compare results across libraries. Fliers, although used by nearly every participating librarian, appear to bring in fewer attendees than other methods. This supports the librarians' general skepticism towards fliers that was expressed in several interviews. Word-of-mouth, though, which librarians did consider helpful, is only very slightly higher.

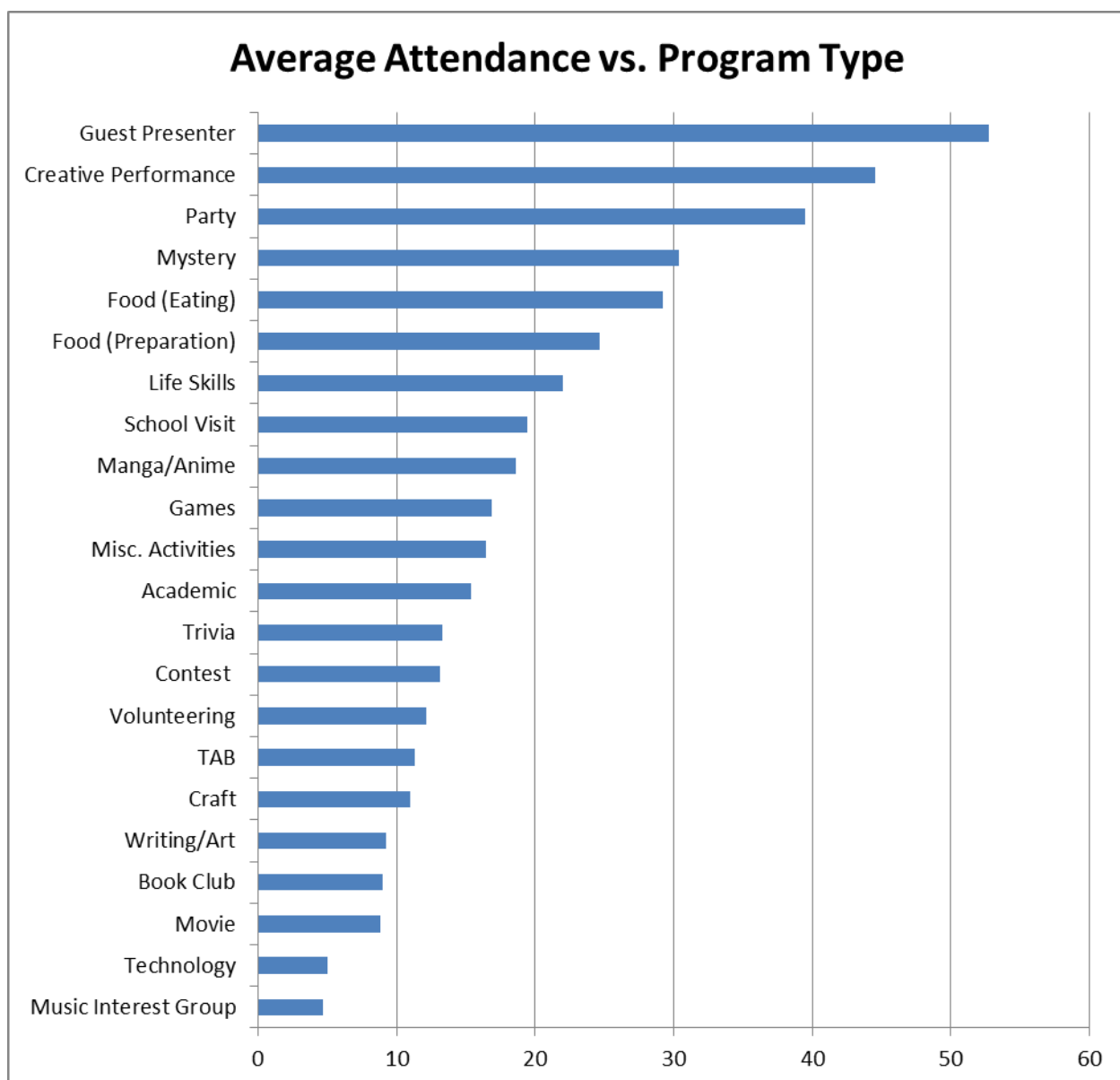
In order to compare how much promotional volume and/or variety affect attendance, the following graph compares the number of methods employed by each library and their average program attendance:



The resulting charts suggest that more is not necessarily better in terms of promotional methods. This could mean that the type of promotional methods these librarians use are more significant than the number of channels they use to reach teens. There is also only slight variation in the number of promotional methods used by different librarians, but the two with the greatest average attendance numbers notably both mentioned six different ways of promoting their programs to teens. The “promotional methods” counted here are those listed in the above chart (Attendance vs. Promotion Types).

Program Content

Program content surely also has an impact on teen attendance. Teen attendance is compared for different program types (as determined by program descriptions provided by librarians when available, otherwise by program titles) below. These results include only those programs for which I received sufficient information (a clear title and/or program description and attendance), so not all programs at all libraries were included. Librarian 2 was not able to offer statistics for specific programs, but almost all of the programs from the other five libraries were included. Programs that fall under two activity types (for example, movies and craft) are included in both.



The resulting chart suggests that a big draw for teens is having guest presenters at the library. “Creative Performances,” which included musical and theatrical performances by teens themselves, were also popular, as were parties. Several librarians mentioned food being important, and that is reflected here as well. Some traditional library programs, though, like movies and book clubs, are fairly low on the graph.

Discussion

Librarian 5 made the point that the same program won't necessarily work from one library to another, and that seems to be a point that comes through in much of the data. Her support for working with nearby colleagues to find good ideas also supports this point, as does the oft-repeated suggestion that word-of-mouth brings people in. Maybe, like Librarian 5 said early on, the pitfalls in seeking suggestions from teen advisory boards is that they only represent the desires of the types of teens who attend advisory board meetings. Librarians, then, need to find a way to get meaningful responses from more representative teen populations. But how? Perhaps this is where meaningful outreach comes in -- finding kids where they want to be rather than where they have to be (at school). Meeting students in a more comfortable environment could help them open up about their interests, and show that the library is not only for purely educational endeavors.

One way I argue high attendance can be achieved is through demonstrating value in teen opinions in the first place, by actively seeking them out. When teens feel that they have directed what takes place at the library, they will naturally be more likely to recommend it to their friends. The librarians interviewed, though, repeatedly suggested that teens can be reluctant to offer suggestions, or can fail to attend programs in which they claim to be interested. Although teen input was sought on some level by all the librarians interviewed, it seems that those teens who are given the most power in deciding teen programs were also the most likely to attend; at least this was the case for Library 6, where teens are invited not only to suggest programming ideas, but to put programs on themselves.

Also regarding teen input, one thing that came out in a few responses, although I did not address it in my questions, was that teenage boys are not necessarily unwilling to participate in traditionally feminine tasks like crafts and crocheting. But librarians cite only a few male participants as evidence for this claim, and it would be interesting to see if significantly more male participants would come to programs that were more geared to traditionally masculine interests. This would require another study.

The interviews and the attendance data also suggest that traditional teen programs are not necessarily what teens are looking for. Book club attendance is relatively low, and despite craft programming being such a staple in many young adult programs, many of the librarians mentioned struggling to bring teens in for craft programs.

There also seems to be a pattern in that teens who attend library programs like to feel helpful -- the teens at Library 6, for example, put on programs for other teens and for kids, and come out in droves for the mass volunteering event. At Library 2, the librarian mentioned that her teens enjoy volunteering at the kids' summer reading programming. Perhaps the empowering nature of helping others is of great value to teenagers.

The librarians interviewed all seem to be using technology to reach their patrons, but have very different experiences with what technology teens are using. Librarian 1's comment that teens don't use email, and that she canceled her email newsletter for that reason, seems to be supported by the low incidents of email newsletters across the other libraries, and by the relatively low average attendance at the library that does use email for promotion. However, Librarian 4 did say that she found emailing teens to be more effective than fliers, so perhaps it depends on the audience. Librarian 3 found Facebook

invites effective, but Librarian 5 said that teens aren't terribly interested in the library's Facebook presence.

Although Ishizuka (2003) quoted Melanie Huggins of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's library as saying that job-related programming was the most popular with her teens, none of these libraries offered job-related programs. The closest to this, perhaps, would be academic and life skills, which were quite popular. Perhaps job skills and job placement programs would be a good idea for these libraries to try.

Regarding promotion, two libraries mentioned that their biggest turn-outs resulted from work with promotional partners (Libraries 1 and 4). This, combined with the popularity of guest presenters, suggests that collaboration really is a strong factor in successful programming.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has a small sample size, but my hope is that the in-person interviews offer a deeper look into the professional practices and opinions of the participants than a survey of more people would. It was also limited geographically because of my need to travel for in-person interviews. Furthermore, the attendance data from librarians varied in quality; some could only offer numbers without program titles and some simply had inconsistent records. It is also possible that the attendance data may not strictly include teens at events, if, for example, a younger sibling came with a teen or the librarian did not strictly enforce age limits.

This is also a topic that may make participants feel inclined to give me the answers they think I want, that make their library look good, rather than what actually takes place in their library. I try to avoid this by asking about concrete information, as in

“What was your most successful program this year in terms of attendance?” which was information I hoped would be available to them, especially if they are able to bring attendance information with them to the interview as asked. Because of the small size of the sample, the study results will not be generalizable to all public libraries, but will offer some insight into what techniques have and have not worked for this set of librarians.

This study also looks only at the presence of certain kinds of promotional methods, not at the quality with which they are carried out in each library. Furthermore, none of the librarians reported doing any formal analysis of promotional methods, so what they report as most and least effective is likely only supported by intuition or by informally asking participants where they heard about the programs.

Further studies could use experiments in which they offered the same program with different promotional methods to see which worked best independently of each other, or could do the same for levels of teen input, or types of program content (based on categories like those above). A future study may also look at a larger selection of libraries, with more diverse geographic locations.

Conclusion

Although certain stand-out programs among those included in this study had a relatively large teen turn-out, the percentage of these communities’ teen populations that are attending library programs is still relatively low. Some ideas for strong programming involve collaboration for both content and promotion, timely pop-culture programming, and simply offering food. Although social networking and technology are immensely popular with teens, the interviews repeatedly revealed the continuing value of building personal relationships with teen library patrons, and demonstrating an understanding of

each teen as an individual. The interviewees also suggest that socializing is an important part of programming for young people, and that librarians should keep an open mind while implementing these practices, both in terms of trying new things, and remembering that even low-attended programs may be of tremendous value to individual participants.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. About how many programs do you have annually?
2. Where do you get your ideas for programs?
3. How much input do you get from teens for program content and promotion?
4. What means do you use to promote your teen programs?
5. What methods do you feel are the most successful? What do you feel are the least successful?
6. Are there any promotional methods you used in the past but have since dropped? When did you make this change?
7. Please describe some of your most successful programs (in terms of attendance).
 - a. Were teens involved in planning the program(s)?
 - b. How did you promote the program(s)?
8. Please describe some of your least successful programs (in terms of attendance).
 - a. Were teens involved in planning the program(s)?
 - b. How did you promote the program(s)?
9. Do you think attendance is a valuable measure of program success? How do you evaluate your programs?
10. Do you have any other comments about teen programming?